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Burma: New Administration Making Peace Conference a Priority

(b)(3) ***Burma's ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) is planning a peace conference with armed ethnic groups, probably to show the public that the new administration can maintain stability.*** State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi in May publicly announced a "21st Century Panglong" peace conference, now expected in late August, and called for participation from armed groups that did not sign the Nationwide Cease-fire Agreement (NCA) in October 2015.

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— The NLD's chief negotiator, Tin Myo Win, said publicly in May that the government would follow the peace process laid out by the previous President with few changes, such as the names of dialogue structures and the invited participants.

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— Aung San Suu Kyi and Tin Myo Win held informal talks in July with leaders of several armed ethnic groups that did not sign the NCA, and government negotiators began preparatory meetings with NCA signatory groups in May, Aung San Suu Kyi has signaled publicly that she will be more inclusive than the previous administration by inviting previously excluded armed ethnic groups to political negotiations.

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— The NLD probably feels pressure to make progress on a peace agreement, given continued clashes between the Burmese Army and armed ethnic groups, as well as fighting among armed groups,

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(b)(3) *Aung San Suu Kyi's decision to call the conference the "21st Century Panglong" probably raises expectations among ethnic minorities that the NLD will negotiate a power-sharing arrangement. Aung San Suu Kyi's father negotiated the original Panglong Agreement in 1947, granting local autonomy to three of Burma's ethnic minorities, The agreement was never implemented, and differing interpretations of its intent by ethnic groups, the military, and the government probably will affect expectations for the new conference.*

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(b)(3) ***Progress toward an inclusive peace agreement will be an important step for the NLD in earning the military's confidence, meeting voter expectations, and opening the possibility of constitutional change.***

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— many voters in ethnic areas backed the NLD rather than ethnic-based parties. (b)(1) (b)(3)

(b)(3) — Some armed ethnic groups were concerned in June that the proposed peace conference would focus on the appearance of progress rather than political negotiations, suggesting that they will be disappointed if the conference yields no substantive agreements. (b)(1) (b)(3)

(b)(3) — Armed ethnic groups expect a power-sharing arrangement will require constitutional change, If the military allowed a revision, the precedent might give the NLD an opening to pursue amending the article that bars Aung San Suu Kyi from the presidency. (b)(1) (b)(3)

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